DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 352 CE 084 878

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TITLE	So You're a Workplace Coach: Support Kit for the Workplace Coach or Mentor Working With New Apprentices and Trainees.
INSTITUTION	Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane.
PUB DATE	2001-10-12
NOTE	13p.; Supported by the Australian Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. For other Training Package Support Materials, see CE 084 876-877.
AVAILABLE FROM	ANTA Publications, GPO Box 3120, Brisbane Q 4001. Fax: 07 3246 2490; Web site: http://www.anta.gov.au/ .
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Education; *Apprenticeships; Employee Responsibility; *Job Training; Mathematics Skills; *Mentors; Postsecondary Education; Reading Skills; Supervisor Supervisee Relationship; *Supervisory Methods; Teacher Student Relationship; *Trainees; *Vocational Education; Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS	Australia; Employer Responsibility; *Job Coaches; Work Based Learning

ABSTRACT

This document is intended as a support kit for workplace coaches and mentors working with new apprentices and trainees in Australian work organizations. The guide begins by listing characteristics of good workplace coaches/mentors, including taking a personal interest in the apprentice/trainee's development; communicating well and developing a rapport; providing feedback and progress reports; and being a good role model, and explains how to develop a good relationship with apprentices/trainees. Presented next are specific tips for accomplishing the following steps in the coaching/mentoring process: giving carefully thought-out instructions; taking time to show apprentices/trainees how to do things correctly; allowing time for apprentices/trainees to practice new skills; and asking questions to check for understanding. Specific suggestions are provided for performing the following tasks related to monitoring apprentice/trainee progress and motivating apprentices/trainees: checking progress; giving feedback; seeking feedback; asking the right questions; providing variety when selecting training experiences; and giving recognition. Common problems affecting apprentices/trainees' workplace performance are listed along with steps for solving them. Tips for assessing apprentices/trainees' reading, writing, and mathematics skills and helping them improve those skills are presented. A list of 10 commonly used training-related terms and a list of responsibilities of employers, apprentices/trainees, and selected Australian organizations involved in overseeing or providing training are included. (MN)

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SO YOU'RE A WORKPLACE COACH

Support kit for the workplace coach or mentor working with new apprentices and trainees

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This project was managed by the Australian National Training Authority on behalf of the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs.

The following communication support materials were produced by AMES for the Australian National Training Authority:

- Getting the Most out of Training
- So You're a Workplace Coach
- Tips on Training for Employers
- Making the Most of your Training

Further resources for supporting apprentices and trainees can be found in the *New Apprenticeships Support Networks Information Kit* available from DETYA Training Reform Section (02) 6240 9588.

SO YOU'RE A WORKPLACE COACH

A booklet designed to support workplace mentors and coaches in working with apprentices and trainees on the job

Contents

Your role 2

Training tips 3
Giving instructions
Show and tell
Practise, practise, practise
Ask questions

Progress and monitoring 4
Check progress
Give feedback
Seek feedback
Ask the right questions

Motivate 4
Provide variety
Give recognition

Solutions to problems 5
Tips when things are not quite right
Towards a solution
Reading, writing and maths
Tips

Getting help 6

Training talk 7

Who s who of training 8

Your role

As a workplace coach you will coach the apprentice/trainee, act as a mentor and support someone embarking on a new career.

A good workplace coach will:

- take a personal interest in the apprentice/trainee's development
- communicate well and develop a rapport with the apprentice/trainee
- provide feedback and progress reports
- be a good role model.

Be clear on your role and responsibilities. Ask:

- what support is available to you in the workplace?
- who is the workplace supervisor that you report to?
- what does the apprentice/trainee have to achieve and by when?
- who is the training organisation and who is the contact person?
- who else will be involved in training in the workplace?
- how do you get a copy of the Training Plan?
- how do you report the apprentice/trainee's progress?

Getting started

Develop a good relationship with the apprentice/trainee. Make sure you:

- welcome the apprentice/trainee and introduce them to other staff
- take an interest
- ask questions

  'How's your work going?'

  'Are you finding your way around the place okay?'

  'How're your classes going?'

  'Is there anything I can do to help?'

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Training tips

People learn best when actively involved in their learning. When teaching a new task ensure your apprentice/trainee knows:

- why you are doing things
- why these things are relevant
- why these things are important
- how and when assessment will occur.

Giving instructions

Take time to think about the instructions you give. Write down the instructions or break the job into steps if necessary.

To give clear instructions you should:

- assume no prior knowledge
- explain why the job/task is done this way
- use clear and simple language
- include safe work practices in your instructions
- ask questions to check for understanding
- make sure there are no distractions.

Show and tell

Take time to show the apprentice/trainee how to do things the correct way.

Observing is a quick and very effective way to learn. It allows you to:

- demonstrate
- explain why the task is done this way
- use correct work practices.

Practise, practise, practise

Allow time for the apprentice/trainee to practise new skills. Expect mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes. Point the apprentice/trainee in the direction of how they can do it right.

Watch and coach:

- be patient
- ask questions to encourage the apprentice/trainee:
  'Thats right Sarah, now what's the next step?'
  'If the engine won't start, what steps would you take to find the problem?'

Encourage and correct:

- give praise where it is due
- suggest techniques to improve:
  'That's good Louise. Now you've mastered the register, I'd like you to concentrate on customer service.'

Ask questions

- check for understanding:
  'What is the first step in making an EFTPOS transaction?'
- involve the learner in decision making:
  'What do you think is the next step?'
- obtain information and feedback:
  'How is your training in the grocery department going? Is there anything you need?'

Progress and monitoring

Check progress

- know how the apprentice/trainee is progressing in all areas of training
- set a regular meeting time with the apprentice/trainee
- use the Training Plan – it outlines the what, where and when of training – remember it is a flexible document – you can change it with the involvement of the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and apprentice/trainee
- ensure the apprentice/trainee's workbook is signed off.

Give feedback

Feedback is important because it:

- allows the apprentice/trainee to measure their progress
- encourages and builds confidence
- targets areas to focus on to improve skills:
  'Now I'd like you to concentrate on getting messages down properly. If you don't know how to spell someone's name – ask.'
- allows you to openly discuss progress and concerns:
  'That's great Sarah, you're getting really good on the phone now.'

Seek feedback

- find out what areas they need extra help with or may be worried about:
  'You don't seem nearly so nervous when you're answering the phone Sarah.
  'How are you feeling about it now?'
- wait for answers – don't be afraid of silence
- be positive, help them find their own solutions.

Ask the right questions

Ask open questions (who, why, what, when, where, how), to encourage feedback:
'How are your classes going? What are you doing next?'
Yes/No questions don't get much information:
'Do you like your classes?'...

Motivate

Provide variety

Apprentices/trainees often spend the majority of their time doing routine jobs. Variety allows the apprentice/trainee to build confidence in their ability as well as make training more interesting.

Variety could include:

- new and different tasks
- opportunities to apply new skills in different work environments – such as alternative work sites, other departments or sections of the business
- visits to trade shows or contact with clients or customers.

Give recognition

You could try these:

- make an announcement at work about their achievements
- give them a mention in the company newsletter or on the noticeboard
- organise a ticket to a trade show
- arrange for them to attend a management meeting or a sales meeting
- nominate the apprentice/trainee for an industry training award – check with your registered training organisation or New Apprenticeships Centre.

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Solutions to problems

Most apprentice/trainees experience problems at some stage during training. These problems can be with the job itself, the training or perhaps more personal issues.

If workplace performance is affected, perhaps the apprentice/trainee is:

- nervous about how well they are going
- uncomfortable with some of the other staff
- under stress – too much on their plate at once, or behind in some aspect of their training
- having personal and/or home difficulties
- having problems with reading, writing or maths requirements of the job or the training.

Towards a solution

When an issue arises, you can help the apprentice/trainee work through it.

Follow these steps:

- have a positive attitude
- put the trainee's needs into perspective
- look for a win/win situation
- negotiate, encourage and advise:
  'Okay Joe, you'll still have to do the cleaning up. But when you've finished I've arranged for you to spend an hour in the accounts department to see how the invoicing works. And next time a pricing job comes in you can assist me with it.'

Tips when things are not quite right

- acknowledge that you are aware that all is not well
- encourage them to talk, though don't push too hard
- ask them open questions – questions that produce more than simply yes or no:
  'Look Joe I know you aren't happy with things at the moment and I'd like to talk about it and see if we can work something out.'
- check your understanding and draw out more information:
  'So Joe, you don't feel like you are learning anything new and are always doing the tasks that nobody else wants to do?'
- wait for them to speak – a pause can be good
- try not to interrupt
- be aware of your body language and gestures – nod with understanding, don't cross your arms.

Solutions to problems

Reading, writing and maths

When working with the apprentice/trainee think about:

- what level of reading, writing and maths does the trainee need to effectively carry out the job
- how you communicate with the apprentice/ trainee
- what skills do you expect of them when coaching and giving instructions
- whether the instructions are more complex than the job
- whether you have realistic expectations.

Tips

- provide examples of documents you use in the workplace – a completed order form, letters
- provide opportunities to copy – lists or order numbers frequently used
- allow plenty of time to practise tasks until they become familiar
- give instructions in sequence, so it's easy to remember:
  'First check the address, then fill out the order.'
- avoid mixing up the sequence when you give the instruction. Don't say:
  'Before you fill the order out make sure you've checked the address.'
- when you've given a complex set of instructions, ask the trainee to repeat them – remember to keep it supportive:
  'Okay then, what do you do first? And then?'
- give positive feedback even for small steps:
  'Okay, that sounds like you've got the hang of it.'
- discuss how the RTO can help you with reading, writing and maths assistance for the apprentice/trainee
- encourage the apprentice/trainee to ask questions when they don't understand.

Getting help

You're not on your own. There are organisations that can assist. Find out what the real problem is and seek help to solve the problem if necessary.

Three easy steps

1 Consult your workplace supervisor.

2 Talk to your local New Apprenticeships Centre for further advice and assistance.

To find a New Apprenticeships Centre call **1800 639 629** or visit the website at www.newapprenticeships.gov.au

3 Contact the State Training Authority (STA) in your state/territory. They may provide field officers to assist solve problems between employers and their apprentice/trainees.

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Training talk

Workplace supervisor
A training manager who will ensure the apprentice/trainee is provided with the opportunities to master the skills and competencies required for their job and training program.

Workplace coach
Person chosen to coach, teach, train, mentor, monitor and guide the apprentice/trainee. In some workplaces the workplace supervisor and workplace coach are the same person.

Assessor
The person(s) responsible for assessment who will determine whether your apprentice/trainee is competent. This person(s) must be qualified. Assessment is organised by the RTO.

On the job training
Instruction, practice and feedback conducted in the workplace.

Off the job training
Conducted away from the worksite, at an RTO, in a classroom at your worksite or outside your organisation.

Training Plan
A document that details the training to be conducted, the method and location. Negotiated between you, the training organisation and the apprentice/trainee.

Training Package
A national resource that consists of both compulsory and elective competencies that makes up national qualifications. Training Packages also include guidelines for assessment and may also include assessment materials and learning strategies.

Unit of competency
National industry approved standards that outline the knowledge and skills necessary for effective performance in the workplace.

Workplace assessment
Collecting evidence and determining if the apprentice/trainee is competent in an industry environment.

Recognition of current competency
The process of formally recognising current skills, knowledge and competencies already acquired through either formal or informal learning.

Who's who of training

The National Code of Good Practice outlines the responsibilities of employers and apprentices/ trainees. Contact your New Apprenticeships Centre for a copy.

Employers
- meet legal obligations
- provide a safe working environment
- support the structured training
- provide supervision and support
- advise trainees of their rights and responsibilities.

Apprentices/trainees
- commit to work and training responsibilities
- require consent from a parent/guardian if less than 18 years of age
- participate in developing a Training Plan
- maintain a record of training.

State Training Authority – STA
Regulates apprenticeships/traineeships in your state or territory. The STA monitors the quality of training, approves RTOs. In addition the STA may:
- advise employers and apprentices/trainees on rights and obligations
- approve early completions, variations to Training Contracts, suspensions and cancellations
- provide field officers to solve problems between employers and their apprentice/trainees.

Apprenticeship/traineeship field officers
The State Training Authority in your state/territory may provide Field Officers to assist to solve problems between employers and their apprentice/ trainees.

Registered Training Organisation – RTO
Also called the Supervising Registered Training Organisation (SRTO). They can:
- assist you and the new apprentice/trainee to select an appropriate training program
- explain the requirements of the training program
- provide advice on fees and charges
- design a Training Plan that meets your needs
- provide training records and training materials
- train the apprentice/trainee and assist you to make sure training is completed
- visit your workplace to check progress
- provide additional learning support if required
- issue qualifications.

New Apprenticeships Centres
Provide free information and advice on:
- available Commonwealth and State Government incentives
- completing and lodging incentive forms
- general information about apprenticeships/traineeships
- selecting the appropriate training
- selecting appropriate RTOs
- rights, responsibilities and obligations
- completing a Training Contract.

Group Training Company – GTC
Also known as Group Training Organisations (GTO), these companies employ apprentices/ trainees and hire them out to 'host' employers while they are undertaking their training. Group training allows you to become involved in training without the commitment of full-time permanent employment.

The GTC will:
- screen and recruit applicants
- handle wages, payroll tax and workers compensation under the Training Contract
- arrange the training
- monitor the progress of the new apprentice/trainee
- provide your organisation with a new apprentice without a long-term employment contract.

Acknowledgements

Project team
Chris Howell: Project Manager, AMES
Sandra Tooney/Liz Davidson: Writers

Steering Committee
Merrill O'Donnell: MAS National
Maxine Semple: VECCI at Work (Bendigo)
Gordon Griffin: Rural Skills Australia
Louise Wignall: ANTA Project Manager
Geoff Foster: DEET, Victoria
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So You're a Workplace Coach

A booklet designed to support workplace mentors and coaches in working with apprentices and trainees on the job.

It includes:

- explanations of common terms
- training tips
- where to go for assistance

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